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ABSTRACT

The T.V. Taxonomy of Questions was developed for use by teachers who wish to stimulate their students' critical thinking skills, but who find the terminology of existing skill taxonomies both confusing and elusive. This taxonomy consists of six levels of questions. Each level is given the name of a television program reflecting how the student thinks and is accompanied with a list of the subskills or cognitive processes used at that level. The six levels, ranging from low to high levels of cognitive stimulation, are as follows: (1) "My Mother the Car," types of questions that require students to think on a literal level; (2) "The 11:00 News," questions that require students to reorganize known material and put it into their own words; (3) "In Search Of," questions that require students to speculate on possible conclusions based on educated guesses; (4) "Columbo," questions that ask students to weigh information and draw conclusions about its validity; (5) "The French Chef," questions requiring students to apply and transfer information from one situation to another; and (6) "The Super Bowl," questions that require students to be involved in the answers. (FL)

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Classroom Questioning Techniques: The T.V. Taxonomy of Questions

Educational programs are designed to teach academic, vocational, social-emotional and communication skills. Within these skill areas, a common goal is shared. That shared goal is to encourage the student to think. A variety of techniques and materials exist to help teachers stimulate student thinking. One of the oldest and most successfully used educational techniques since the time of Socrates is that of asking questions. Educators such as Bloom (1963), Barrett (1970), Sanders (1966), and Guszak (1967) have attempted to arrange the types of questions teachers ask into hierarchies or taxonomies. It is assumed that different types of questions stimulate different types of thinking (Partin, 1979; Glasser, 1972). Asking a student when his birthday is, requires a different level of thinking than asking the same student what it would be like to have a birthday every day of the year.

Teachers who give reading instruction either directly during the reading period or indirectly through the content area are actually involved in stimulating their students thinking (Stauffer, 1975; Herber, 1976; Spache, 1977; Harris and Sipay, 1980). Reading is thinking,

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yet most students are being denied the opportunity to think on higher levels of cognitive stimulation (Betts, 1957; Hoover, 1972; Tatham, 1978; Partin, 1979). Instead of being encouraged to read critically or to appreciate what they are reading, the students are asked to respond to the factual content of the material by giving immediate response on a literal, recall level.

In order to aid teachers who find the terminology in existing taxonomies confusing and elusive, the T.V. Taxonomy of Questions was developed. This taxonomy consists of six (6) levels of questions. Each type of question is given the name of a television program reflecting how the child is thinking at that level of questioning. Sub-skills or mental processes involved are identified and questions from Goldilocks and the Three Bears are used as examples at each level. The six levels, ranging from low level of cognitive stimulation to high, are listed below.

T.V. Taxonomy of Questions

1. MY MOTHER THE CAR - Many television critics consider this program to be an example of television at its worst. The program was without entertainment and without meaning. The viewer was asked to do nothing and as a result of watching, although time was expended, gained nothing.

Students answering this type of question are asked to think on a literal level. They can repeat known information but they can not tell the teacher what it means. The student is asked to do no thinking and thus gains nothing. But, asking this type of question does take up time.

a. Skills or processes involved include:
   - answering yes or no
   - naming
   - repeating what was read or stated verbatim
   - recalling known information
   - remembering known information
   - identifying people, places, information
   - recognizing
   - locating

b. Examples from The Three Bears
   - "What was the girls name who went into the house where the three bears lived?"
   - How many bears were there?"
   - (Teacher pointing to the book asks) - "Which one is Baby Bear?"

2. 11:00 NEWS - By the time the 11:00 NEWS comes on the air, the news has been reported at least two previous times that day - once at noon and once again at dinner time. What is different is not the news but the narrative of the different news stories. An example would be

facts being reported in a different sequence. For the student, this would mean reorganizing the known material and putting it into his/her own words.

a. Skills or processes involved include:

- telling it in your own words
- giving your definition
- reconstructing known information
- sequencing
- explaining
- describing
- identifying a main theme
- comparing and contrasting
- classifying

b. Examples from The Three Bears:

- "Tell me all about Goldilocks and the Three Bears in your own words."
- "What is porridge?"
- "What happened first in the story?"
- "What happened after Baby Bear's chair broke?"

3. IN SEARCH OF - This television program is designed to examine facts and conjecture and to suggest possible explanations for natural phenomenas and historical events. The producers go beyond the commonly accepted explanations by suggesting alternative explanations based on other sets of facts. The student task in answering this type of question is to speculate possible conclusions based on educated guesses.

a. Skills or processes involved include:

- inference
- prediction
- hypothesis
- anticipation

b. Examples from The Three Bears:

- "Would Goldilocks ever go back to visit the three bears?"
- "Do you think the three bears will lock their door the next time they leave their house?"
- "What would have happened if Goldilocks hadn't broken Baby Bear's chair?"

4. COLUMBO - As a detective, Columbo evaluates evidence in an attempt to solve a mystery. Students would also act as detectives in attempting to answer this type of question by weighing the information and drawing conclusions as to its validity.

a. Skills or processes include:

- judging
- evaluating
- separating fact from fiction
- healthy skepticism
- relating details to one another
- separating fact from opinion

b. Examples from The Three Bears:

- "Was it okay for Goldilocks to go into the three bears' house when no one was home?"

- "Should Goldilocks be punished for breaking the chair?"
- "Would you expect Goldilocks to apologize for what she did?"
- "Could this story really happen?"
- "Was Goldilocks a good girl?"

5. THE FRENCH CHEF WITH JULIA CHILDS - Ms. Childs shows the viewer how to prepare foods. It is then up to the viewer to try to recreate the recipes at home. Students are asked to apply and to transfer information from one situation to another.

a. Skills or processes involved include:
   - application
   - transference
   - generalizing

b. Examples from The Three Bears:
   - "Is there something in the story that can help you respect another's property?"
   - "How can the lesson Goldilocks learned help you?"
   - "Are all little girls like Goldilocks?"

6. THE SUPER BOWL - This is professional football's biggest seasonal event. It pits the best two teams against one another. The football fan gets emotionally involved by coaching from the sideline, second guessing the coaches and by vicariously becoming one of the players.

This game is not merely watched, it is savored. At this level the student is at their highest level of cognitive stimulation. It has the student becoming emotionally involved.

a. Skills or processes involved include:
   - appreciating
   - valuing
   - judging worth or merit
   - cherishing
   - prizing
   - imagining

b. Examples from <u>The Three Bears</u>:
   - "Why did you like or not like the story?"
   - "If you were in the woods and saw a cottage with an unlocked door, what would you do?"
   - "How would you have felt if you were Baby Bear?"

Since time is going to be spent by the teacher on asking questions why not foster and enhance a students thinking skills in the process? The T.V. Taxonomy of Questions can be used to guide a teacher in asking questions.

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